



# Opportunities and Considerations for International Service-Learning Programs

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## What are the Needs?

- The World Health Organization estimates that there are 650 million people with disabilities worldwide, most live in countries with little or no access to rehabilitation. <sup>1</sup>
- A growing demand for global health education has resulted in increased training opportunities internationally as part of University training programs. <sup>1</sup>
- Global health experiences can help students build skills in clinical care while fostering cultural humility and collaboration to improve health outcomes for individuals across the globe.

### Service-Learning:

A structured learning experience, combines community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and reflection. A philosophy of education that emphasizes engaged learning with the goal of social responsibility <sup>1</sup>

### Voluntourism:

A form of tourism in which travelers participate in voluntary work in a way that may create a cycle of dependence for local communities <sup>2</sup>

## Objective

Global health can be a valuable addition to training curricula in Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) training programs, giving trainees the opportunity to apply clinical experience to a new setting and advance cultural competency by immersing themselves in another culture.

## LEND Curriculum

- Review of the Maternal and Child Health Leadership Competencies including cultural competence, interdisciplinary team building, and ethical practice in the context of global learning opportunities
- ID Seminar content created to share ISL principles and global experiences, and to apply research, education and service principles to the the concept of reducing health care disparities
- LEND fellow involvement included:
  - Pre-trip preparation: Empirical readings, guided discussion, program history
  - Logistics: Communication with host sites
  - Program evaluation: Set goals with host sites at the beginning and review at the end
  - Teaching: Working with local therapists, students, children, and families
  - Reflection: Daily reading and reflection group; Reflection paper
  - Enhancement: Evaluation areas of improvement, expansion; Growth for sustainability
  - Post-trip follow up: with host sites via virtual communication
- Outcomes measured utilizing the MCH leadership skills self-assessment
- Reflections published in AUCD 360



“Rather than recognizing differences, I recognized that with the same shared vision, the differences became irrelevant. Cultural competency is not something you have or don’t have, it’s something that is continuously evolving, and a process of growth that is shared with those that we partner with.” - LEND PT Resident

“The international service learning program allowed me to combine several leadership goals of mine, including developing a program, serving underserved communities, lecturing to other professionals, and reflecting upon the OTs role in the context of global health.” – LEND OT Fellow



Image Descriptions: Program participants, LEND faculty, and students in Mexico (above) and Ukraine (below)

## Looking Ahead

- Technology-based health education is a low cost method to share evidence-based knowledge across the world in the context of COVID 19
- Exploration of technology-based education options, including a Project ECHO series in Ukraine and a virtual conference in Mexico
- Continued expansion of programs across LEND disciplines

## References

1. Pechak, C. M., & Thompson, M. (2009). A conceptual model of optimal international service-learning and its application to global health initiatives in rehabilitation. *Physical therapy, 89*(11), 1192–1204. <https://doi.org/10.2522/ptj.20080378>
2. Smith, M. (2015). *The Cost of Volunteering: Consequences of Voluntourism*. (Anthropology senior theses, University of Pennsylvania).

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